

VZCZCXRO3005  
RR RUEHPA  
DE RUEHNM #0310 0721549  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 121549Z MAR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4186  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 3435  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0660  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 000310

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W  
PARIS FOR AF WATCHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2018  
TAGS: [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [NG](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGER: OPTIMISM ABOUT THE PROSPECT FOR PEACE

REF: A. NIAMEY 277  
[1](#)B. NIAMEY 81  
[1](#)C. 07 NIAMEY 1217  
[1](#)D. 07 NIAMEY 625

Classified By: AMBASSADOR BERNADETTE M. ALLEN, REASON: 1.4 a/b/d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On March 12, Ambassador Allen met with the Government of Niger (GON) High Commissioner for the Restoration of Peace, Mohamed Anacko, to discuss the Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ) release of 25 hostages (ref A) and whether it was an opening for the GON to negotiate with MNJ. Anacko was very upbeat and stated that he believes the prospect for peace is extremely good. He said the change in the GON tone is making it possible for dialogue. He believes Tandja's decision to travel to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in Dakar, his first trip out of the country in the past twelve months, is an indicator that Tandja is more at ease and perhaps optimistic that peace will soon reign in the north. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Anacko reported that he discussed the ongoing rebellion with his close friend, Finance Minister Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine, even made a personal plea to Zeine to try to move the President towards negotiations with MNJ. Anacko said Zeine initially expressed hesistance about engaging Tandja on a matter outside his portfolio, but Anacko insisted that for the good of the country, Zeine as one of Tandja's confidants should engage him because he remains one of the few persons able to sway Tandja's decisionmaking. He also informed Zeine that he had learned of the possibility that MNJ would make a goodwill gesture to the GON by releasing a number of hostages. (Note: Few Nigeriens have mentioned the Libyan role in the hostage release, beyond the name of the Foundation that escorted the hostages back to Niamey. End note.)

[1](#)3. (C) The fact that the hostage release did occur put Anacko on more solid footing with Tandja. He noted that for the first time in several months, Tandja accepted his phone call, that he's certain Tandja already was aware at the time of his call that the hostages would soon be released. He said Tandja was in good spirits and he sensed that Zeine's discussion with Tandja did a lot of good. Anacko noted that the mood across the country has changed, that most Nigeriens are tired of the insecurity and are more verbal about the need for the GON to negotiate. He pointed out the GON tone has changed, that GON Prime Minister Seini Oumarou's remarks

about the release of the hostages did not mention "bandits or criminals", as had been the norm when referring to MNJ.

¶4. (C) When asked whether Tandja's decision to travel to the OIC Summit was a sign that he's at ease and hopeful that hostilities in the north would soon end, Anacko responded in the affirmative. He said Tandja had not attended other important summits in the past year, such as the Brussels, ECOWAS and African Union summits, so the fact that he chose to be absent from Niger at this time to attend the OIC Summit was encouraging. He said most people were caught by surprise by the sudden travel, that there are lots of discussion about this around Niamey. (Note: It appears most people do not believe, as was headlined in the government newspaper "Le Sahel", that the decision to travel to Dakar was taken to show solidarity with other Islamic leaders. End note.)

¶5. Minimize considered.

ALLEN